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ABSTRACT

Using census data from pre-Civil War Georgia at two points in time (1850 and 1860), this paper describes the Georgian publishing industry and profiles those involved in it. Microfilm editions of handwritten documents were scanned to find the names and other data (residence, job title, age, sex, place of birth, and value of property owned) of those involved in any phase of the publishing industry. This profile was then compared to an earlier profile of Wisconsin newsmen obtained for the same two years. Results showed that the publishing industry was fairly widespread in Georgia with 21 out of 94 counties reflecting some activity in 1850, and 37 of 124 counties in 1860. Still, two-thirds of the counties did not have residents who were employed in the publishing business. Most of the people involved were young and were printers, with less than a third employed in the editorial end of production. Publishing was a vocation all but closed to females and included publications such as weekly newspapers, a few dailies, and a range of literary, religious and scientific journals. A comparison of data from Georgia and Wisconsin revealed that by 1860 Wisconsin had outstripped Georgia in the number of publications and people in the publishing industry. (HOD)

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THE ANTEBELLUM GEORGIA PUBLISHING INDUSTRY: A GROUP PORTRAIT

A paper presented at the AEJ Regional Colloquium (History Division), Gainesville, Fla., March 20-21, 1982.

by

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THE ANTEBELLUM GEORGIA PUBLISHING INDUSTRY: A GROUP PORTRAIT

Although there are numerous studies of Georgia journalists and journalistic institutions, few attempts have been made to describe with any precision the total publishing industry or those involved in it in the decade before the Civil War. This paper draws on census data to profile the state of the industry and the people in it at two points in time, 1850 and 1860. It is, in a sense, a group portrait, but it is one that is not without flaws, and it raises questions about the use of census data, even after some faithful and tedious data gathering and checking. Although it will show the utility of census data in projects of this kind, it also will outline some of the problems involved.

Census data have been used for many historical studies, but seldom in the field of journalism history. The title for this study is borrowed from a paper by Carolyn Stewart Dyer, then of Colorado State University[1], which raised interest in a study of this kind. Her study profiled Wisconsin newsmen for the two years in question. Thus, we hope to present a group portrait of Georgians in the publishing industry, describe the state of the industry itself, and compare the two states, where possible.

METHOD

The census schedules for 1850 and 1860 were examined to find the names and other data of those involved in any phase of the publishing industry. The microfilm edition of these handwritten

documents were scanned to extract the name, residence, job title, age, sex, place of birth, and, in some instances, value of property owned. The microfilm edition was used because of its availability, but this caused problems. The quality of reproduction of the projected images was often poor, and in some instances illegible. It would be better to use the manuscripts themselves, if one could afford the trip to Washington. The 1860 data in our study is partly flawed because of the difficulty in reading one particular roll of microfilm, and because one roll was missing from the file, though it represented a small potential for names. The results, then, are as close as one may come, for the moment. They represent, we feel, proportions that are reliable, even if the totals are not complete. Other census reports, such as those covering manufacturing, were used for certain data, including numbers of periodicals and value of product in the publishing business.

FINDINGS

As background, Table I compares population for Georgia and Wisconsin from 1840 to 1860. Georgia grew by a third between 1840 and 1850, and by about 10 per cent in the next decade. Nearly half the population were slaves. Wisconsin grew more dramatically in the 20 years, by two-and-a-half times from 1850 to 1860. By 1860, the white population there was larger than that of Georgia. Georgia ranked ninth in size among states and territories at all three times, while Wisconsin climbed from 30th in 1840, when it was still a territory, to 15th in 1860.

Table II shows the totals for publishing occupations for 1850 and 1860 for both states. Wisconsin totals are taken from the Dyer study. The data show several things. There was growth, but nowhere near that of the younger state of Wisconsin. Second, the business was labor intensive, with about 70 per cent employed as printers. Third, the list of job titles varies from state to state and year to year, making precise comparisons difficult. We do not know what instructions were given census takers, or that one might not have regarded a one-man weekly operation as a "printer" while another might have called him a "publisher," for example. We can but hope that common sense would cause them to call people by something most closely akin to their real occupation. Average age for those working in Georgia in 1850 was 28.7, and in 1860 it was 28.2.[2] For Wisconsin, the figures were lower, at 25.7 and 26.6 for the two years.[3] The lower average age may be explained by the fact of growth in and migration to Wisconsin, in comparison with the larger and older state of Georgia.

Place of birth data shows that a majority of those in the industry in Georgia were natives, and about three-quarters of them were from southern states (Table III). The changes between 1850 and 1860 only served to solidify the essential southernness of the work force. It is interesting to compare this data with that of Wisconsin. In 1850, only 2 of 242 in the publishing business were natives. New York natives made up 47.1 per cent of the work force. About 23 per cent were foreign born. By 1860, 6.5 percent were natives, 31.6 per cent were from New York, and 30 per cent were

foreign born. In 1850, only one female was in the publishing business in Georgia. In 1860, we found only two from a list of 230 names.

Table IV -- compiled from the published census reports rather than the census manuscripts -- shows the size of the printing business in the two states and its growth over the decade. Georgia was still the largest in terms of value of product of printing establishments, but the number of establishments had increased more in the state of Wisconsin.

Table V shows the number of publications -- from weeklies serving a community, through literary and scientific magazines -- that the census bureau had turned up in both years. Georgia's publications jumped from 51 to 101, while Wisconsin's tripled from 46 to 152. This growth is reflected in the employment figures in Table II.

Finally, the accuracy of the data gathered from the census schedules is cast in some doubt by Table VI. In parentheses are the data gathered by this author and Dyer. The other data are drawn from final census summaries which, one assumes, were taken from the original census schedules. An alternative source would have been a special census of manufacturing that would have some possibility for different figures, for reasons we still could only guess at. In both years, for both states, the totals developed by contemporary researchers were below the totals reported by the census bureau in their original data.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The use of census schedules provides opportunities that use of census reports and summaries do not permit. We can develop breakdowns of occupations by age, sex, place of birth and other variables, and draw lists of names for all those engaged in the profession. The list of names is not so long but what they might not be compared for mobility studies. That is, how many editors or printers stayed in one place for a decade, and if they moved, did they show up in the same state? As indicated earlier, the quality of microfilm reproduction leaves much to be desired, leading to inaccurate lists. Even with that flaw and whatever errors that may lead to in the unreconciled totals in some tables, the lists and data derived from them are useful for building profiles, comparisons and trends over time with more precision than is available by other means. The gaps in data are not so large as to destroy the representative nature of averages and proportions developed from the schedules.

What can we say with reasonable assurance about the Georgia publishing industry in the decade or so before the Civil War? First, it was fairly widespread, with 21 of 94 counties reflecting some activity in 1850, and 37 of 124 counties in 1860. Still, two-thirds of the counties did not have residents who were employed in the publishing business. The average age of those in the business was on the young side, and changed little over the decade. Most of the people involved were printers, with much less than a third employed in the editorial end. It was a vocation all but closed to females, although this was not necessarily so in other states. It was a varied field, including numerous weekly newspapers, a handful of dailies and a range of literary, religious and scientific journals.

The comparisons of data from Georgia and Wisconsin are intriguing. One was an original state in the old South, with a high percentage of slaves, and a steady growth in population and the publishing business. The other was a new state in the upper Midwest, experiencing a rapid influx of settlers, a high percentage of them European immigrants. Growth was explosive. By 1860, the younger cousin in the North had outstripped Georgia in the number of publications and people in the publishing business.

FOOTNOTES

1. "The Antebellum Wisconsin Newspaperman: A Group Portrait," paper presented to the History Division, Association for Education in Journalism, Madison, Wisconsin, August 23, 1977.

2. U.S. Census Manuscript Schedules for Georgia, 1850 and 1860.

3. Dyer, Tables III and IV.

TABLE I

POPULATION FOR 1840, 1850 AND 1860

	Georgia		
	1840	1850	1860
White		521,572	591,550
Free colored		2,921	3,500
Slaves		381,682	462,198
Indians			38
	691,392	906,185	1,057,286
Rank:	9th	9th	9th

	Wisconsin		
White		304,756	773,693
Free colored		635	1,171
Indians			613
Half-breeds			404
	30,945	305,391	775,881
Rank:	30th	24th	15th

Source: Statistics of the United States in 1860. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1866, pp. xx and lvi.

TABLE II

PUBLISHING EMPLOYMENT, GEORGIA AND WISCONSIN
1850 and 1860

Occupation	Georgia				Wisconsin			
	1850		1860		1850		1860	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Apprentice	1	.7	7	3.0	1	.4	88	11.5
Printer	107	70.9	154	67.0	194	80.4	488	63.7
Printer-Publisher			2	.9	3	1.3	18	2.3
Publisher			8	3.5	4	1.7	22	2.9
Editor-Asst Editor	29	19.2	37	16.1	19	7.9	97	12.7
Journalist-Newsman	2	1.3						
Bookmaker	6	4.0	3	1.3				
Bookbinder-AP Bkbdr	6	4.0	6	2.6				
Book publisher			1	.4				
Printing foreman			2	.9				
Other related			9	3.9				
Editor-publisher					9	3.8	10	1.3
Typesetter					1	.4	13	1.7
Special editor							10	1.3
	151	100.0	230	100.0	240	99.7	766	100.3

Sources: Georgia--U.S. Census Manuscripts, 1850 and 1860.
Wisconsin--Carolyn Stewart Dyer, "The Antebellum Wisconsin Newspaperman: A Group Portrait," Paper presented to the History Division, Association for Education in Journalism, Madison, Wisconsin, Aug. 23, 1977

TABLE III

PLACE OF BIRTH, GEORGIANS IN PUBLISHING INDUSTRY

	1850		1860	
	N	%	N	%
Alabama	1	.7	2	.9
Connecticut	3	2.0		
Delaware			2	.9
D.C.			2	.9
Florida	1	.7	4	1.8
Georgia	80	54.0	130	58.6
Maine	1	.7	2	.9
Maryland			4	1.8
Massachusetts	2	1.4	1	.5
Missouri	1	.7		
New Jersey	2	1.4	3	1.4
New York	11	7.5	6	2.7
North Carolina	9	6.1	7	3.2
Ohio	1	.7	1	.5
Pennsylvania	1	.7	1	.5
Rhode Island	1	.7	1	.5
South Carolina	17	11.6	34	15.3
Tennessee	5	3.4	3	1.4
Vermont			1	.5
Virginia	4	2.7	8	8.6
England	3	3.0	2	.9
Ireland	2	1.4	4	1.8
Germany	1	.7	3	3.4
Other foreign	1	.7	1	.5
	147	99.8	222	100.5
Ga., S.C., N.C. Fla., Md., Va., Tenn., Ala., D.C.	112	76.2	194	87.4
Other U.S.	28	19.0	18	8.1
Foreign	7	4.8	10	4.5
	147	100.0	222	100.0
Ga. & S.C.	97	66.0	164	74.0

Sources: U.S. Census Manuscripts, 1850 and 1860.

TABLE IV

PRINTING PRODUCTION IN THE U.S., YEAR ENDING JUNE 1, 1860

	No. of Establishments	Capital Investment	Cost of Raw Material	Average Employment M	F
WIS	56	136,800	92,030	268	4
GA	21	181,250	87,241	183	3
U.S.	1,666	$19,622,318	$12,844,288	17,826	2,333

	Annual Cost of Labor	Value of Products 1860	1850
WIS	85,612	242,983	28,698
GA	102,744	267,974	64,200
U.S.	$7,588,096	$31,063,898	$11,586,549

Source: Manufactures of the United States in 1860. Washington: Government Printing Office, p. lxlii.

TABLE V

NUMBER OF PUBLICATIONS OF ALL KINDS

	1850 GA	1850 WIS	1860 GA	1860 WIS
Daily newspapers	5	6	12	14
Semi & tri-weekly	3	4	6	8
Weekly	37	35	69	128
Semi-monthly			9	
Monthly	6	1		1
Quarterly			1	
Religious			4	1
	51	46	101	152

Source: Seventh Census of the United States: 1850. Washington, 1853, pp. 929, 930, p. 384. Statistics of the United States in 1860. Washington, Government Printing Office, 1866, p. 321.

TABLE VI

COMPARISON OF CENSUS AND RESEARCH DATA

Occupation	1850 GA	1850 WIS	1860 GA	1860 WIS
Bookbinders	15 (12)	16	24 (9)	46
Booksellers	11	14	23	38
Editors	45 (29)	24 (19)	71 (37)	126 (97)
Newsmen	(2)		4	15
Printers	190 (107)	209 (194)	334 (154)	579 (488)
Publishers	1	6 (4)	15 (10)	22 (22)
Reporters			4 (1)	6
Apprentice	(1)		(7)	
Book publishers			(1)	
Printing foreman			(2)	
Other related			(9)	
	262 (151)	269 (240)	475 (230)	832 (766)

(Research data in parentheses)

Sources: Population of the United States in 1860, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864, p. 77, p. 545, and Table II.